

What is claimed is:

- 1        1. A computer readable medium having a computer program encoded thereon, comprising:  
2                a first portion of said medium having a first program segment for facilitating the  
3        selection of preferences for information to be displayed as part of a service control component;  
4                a second portion of said medium having a second program segment for receiving  
5        over a communication network information from a plurality of service providers in accordance  
6        with said selected preferences; and  
7                a third portion of said medium having a third program segment for displaying said  
8        information within the service control component, wherein at least one of the plurality of service  
9        providers is represented in the service control component by a unique icon that includes real time  
10       status updates.
- 1        2. The computer readable medium of claim 1, wherein a proxy multiplexor aggregates the  
2        information received from the plurality of service providers.
- 1        3. The computer readable medium of claim 1, wherein the service control component is  
2        configured in conjunction with a browser.
- 1        4. The computer readable medium of claim 3, wherein the service control component is an  
2        embedded control bar.
- 1        5. The computer readable medium of claim 1, wherein the service control component is an  
2        independent display object.
- 1        6. The computer readable medium of claim 1, wherein said unique icon is selectable by the  
2        user to retrieve additional information from a corresponding one of said service providers.

1        7. A service controller system for integrating information from a plurality of service  
2 providers, comprising:  
3                a proxy multiplexor which receives information from the plurality of providers,  
4 wherein the proxy multiplexor aggregates the information from the plurality of providers; and  
5                an end user service control component which receives information from the proxy  
6 multiplexor, wherein each respective provider is represented by an individual icon within the end  
7 user component, at least one of said icons displaying the most current information received from  
8 its associated provider.

1        8. The service controller system of claim 7, wherein at least one of the plurality of providers  
2 is an HTTP server.

1        9. The service controller system of claim 7, wherein the end user component is integrated as  
2 part of a browser.

1        10. The service controller system of claim 7, wherein the end user component is a stand-  
2 alone object.

1        11. The service controller system of claim 7, wherein new providers may be added for  
2 display in the user's end user component via a centralized server.

1        12. The service controller system of claim 11, wherein the centralized server is an HTTP  
2 server having SSL capabilities.

1 13. The service controller system of claim 7, further comprising a second end user  
2 component having individual icons representing others of the plurality of service providers,  
3 wherein both end user components receive information from the proxy multiplexor.

1 14. The service controller system of claim 7, wherein said individual icon may be selected to  
2 retrieve additional information from a corresponding one of said service providers.

1 15. A service controller system comprising:  
2 a plurality of service providers that provide information and content to a plurality  
3 of users;  
4 a proxy multiplexor for each of the plurality of users that receives information and  
5 content from the plurality of providers, wherein each proxy multiplexor aggregates the  
6 information and content from the plurality of providers for each user; and  
7 an end user control component which continuously receives updated information  
8 and content from the proxy multiplexor, wherein each respective provider is represented by an  
9 individual icon within the end user component, each individual icon being updated whenever  
10 new information is provided from the respective service provider associated with that icon.

1 16. The service controller system of claim 15, wherein the end user component includes a  
2 display portion that contains the provider icons.

1 17. The service controller system of claim 15, wherein the end user component is integrated  
2 as part of a Web browser.

1 18. The service controller system of claim 15, wherein the end user component is a stand-  
2 alone display object.

1 19. The service controller system of claim 15, wherein new providers may be added for  
2 display in the user's end user component via a centralized server.

1 20. The service controller system of claim 19, wherein the centralized server is an HTTP  
2 server having SSL capabilities.

1 21. The service controller system of claim 15, wherein the proxy multiplexor is an executable  
2 running on a user's machine.

1 22. The service controller system of claim 15, wherein each individual icon is updated  
2 without action required of the user.

1 23. The service controller system of claim 15, wherein each individual icon provides an alert  
2 to the user when updated with new information.

1 24. A method for displaying content from a plurality of service providers as part of a service  
2 control component, comprising:

3 receiving from a user a selection of preferences for receiving and displaying the  
4 content;

5 receiving over a communication network the content from the plurality of service  
6 providers in accordance with the preferences; and

7 displaying the content in accordance with the preferences, wherein at least one of  
8 the plurality of service providers is represented in the service control component by a unique  
9 icon that includes real time updates comprising at least some of the received content.

1 25. The method of claim 24, wherein a proxy multiplexor aggregates the content received  
2 from the plurality of service providers.

1 26. The method of claim 24, wherein the service control component is configured in  
2 conjunction with a browser.

1 27. The method of claim 26, wherein the service control component is an embedded control  
2 bar.

1 28. The method of claim 24, wherein the service control component is an independent  
2 display object.

1 29. The method of claim 24, wherein said unique icon is selectable by the user to retrieve  
2 additional information from a corresponding one of said service providers.